



Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Peer Program

Rethinking I-94: Minnesota DOT

A TPCB Peer Exchange Event

Location: St. Paul, Minnesota

Date: August 15-16, 2017

Host Agency: Minnesota Department of Transportation

National Peers: Tim Hill, Ohio Department of Transportation
Michael Trepanier, Massachusetts Department of Transportation

Federal Agencies: Federal Highway Administration
Volpe National Transportation Systems Center



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Notice

This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the Department of Transportation in the interest of information exchange. The United States Government assumes no liability for the contents or use thereof.

The United States Government does not endorse products or manufacturers. Trade or manufacturers' names appear herein solely because they are considered essential to the objective of this report.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE December 2017		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Rethinking I-94: Minnesota DOT: A TPCB Peer Exchange			5a. FUNDING NUMBERS HW2LA4 / QD149	
6. AUTHOR(S) Alexander Kosnett; Noah Augustine; Jonah Chiarenza, AICP			5b. CONTRACT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Department of Transportation John A Volpe National Transportation Systems Center 55 Broadway Cambridge, MA 02142-1093			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER DOT-VNTSC-FHWA-18-03	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration/Federal Highway Administration Office of Planning & Environment/Office of Planning 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER FHWA-HEP-18-028	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT This document is available to the public through the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, VA 22161.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) This report highlights key recommendations and noteworthy practices identified at "Rethinking I-94: MnDOT Peer Exchange" held on August 15-16, 2017 in St. Paul, Minnesota. This event was sponsored by the Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Peer Program, which is jointly funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Keywords: Minneapolis, St. Paul, Twin Cities, public involvement, stakeholder engagement, partnering, communication, community outreach, collaboration, decisionmaking, planning and environmental linkages (PEL)			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 35	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18
298-102

Contents

- Introduction 5
 - Event Overview 5
- Key Recommendations 6
- Background 7
 - Rethinking I-94 7
- Peer Exchange Overview..... 8
 - Event Goals and Peer Selections..... 8
 - Peer Exchange Sessions 9
- Peer Project Presentations 10
 - The Power of Community Involvement: ODOT’s 70/71 Project 10
 - Reconnecting Somerville: MassDOT’s Grounding McGrath Highway Project 11
- Key Themes and Lessons Learned 12
 - Applying Planning & Environmental Linkages (PEL) Frameworks..... 12
 - Engaging Communities..... 13
 - Communicating Clearly 16
 - Articulating Project Boundaries 19
 - Managing Community Expectations 19
 - Ensuring Accountability 21
 - Finding Creative and Flexible Solutions 22
- Conclusion..... 23
- Appendices..... 24
 - Appendix A: Key Contacts 24
 - Appendix B: Peer Exchange Agenda 25
 - Appendix C: Discussion Questions and Report Outs 27
 - Topic 1..... 27
 - Topic 2..... 29
 - Topic 3..... 32

Introduction

This report highlights key recommendations and noteworthy practices identified at “Rethinking I-94: MnDOT Peer Exchange” held on August 15-16, 2017 in St. Paul, Minnesota. This event was sponsored by the Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Peer Program, which is jointly funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The goal of the peer exchange program is to facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building by connecting peers from different states and/or agencies to exchange best practices and innovative solutions to transportation planning challenges.

Event Overview

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), with support from the Minnesota Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), requested a peer exchange from the FHWA/FTA TPCB Program to assist MnDOT staff with the development of a framework for stakeholder and public engagement. MnDOT is currently working to gather information from residents who use I-94 between St. Paul and Minneapolis as the agency prepares for freeway and potential corridor improvements in the coming years. Rethinking I-94 includes urban areas where freeway construction and operations have direct impacts—both positive and negative—on neighboring communities. Through discussion with MnDOT and FHWA Division Office staff, the planning team (comprised of the FHWA, FTA, FHWA MN Division, the Volpe Center, and MnDOT) identified FHWA’s suite of Planning & Environmental Linkages (PEL) research and tools as valuable assets to help guide the State DOT towards successful project delivery. With a focus on PEL stakeholder and public engagement, both in the context of I-94 and for application to other projects statewide, MnDOT was specifically interested in learning from peers with experience implementing the following strategies:

- PEL frameworks for successful collaboration with project partners.
 - What structures best support collaboration?
 - What organizational roles and responsibilities set a project up for success?
 - What are strategies for adopting planning products in reference to NEPA (PEL)?
- How decision-making processes are established and streamlined.
 - What works/does not work?
 - How to manage data sharing and perform technical analyses?
 - How to link systems-level planning and programming with project-specific decision-making?
- Protocols for engaging community groups and conducting public engagement.
 - What works/does not work?
 - What are some new, innovative, and effective public engagement techniques?
- Managing community expectations.
 - How is “community buy-in” effectively achieved, especially with controversial projects?
 - What are some management approaches for incorporating community desires into projects, or working with community desires that exceed project scope/capacity?

- What are some techniques for managing unexpected issues (in project scoping, community relations, etc.)?
- Challenges/Risks
 - What unanticipated issues arose on projects regarding engagement and communications?
 - What lessons were learned – what would you change if you could?
 - How do you document decisions and the decision-making process?

Key Recommendations

Through this TPCB Peer Exchange, MnDOT learned from Ohio DOT and Massachusetts DOT about the value of, and strategies for delivering successful projects that accomplish agency transportation goals, while supporting broader community-wide goals at the same time. Strategies to support these outcomes include the following:

- **Engage with communities** by developing long-lasting relationships with neighborhoods and community organizations that operate as a partnership and information exchange.
- **Use visual tools** such as renderings, full color illustrations, and mapping to ensure project details and options are clearly and legibly presented and understood by community members and stakeholders.
- **Determine internally, and then articulate clearly externally, the limitations of a project**—whether in the form of physical parameters, fiscal constraints, or regulatory requirements, to manage community expectations.
- **Allow for creativity and the expression of local stories and culture where possible**, to recognize the historic contributions of community members to the character of their neighborhoods.
- **Ensure that decision-making is transparent** and that project partners—whether public servants or other agency staff and managers, community members, neighborhood and community organizations, and private partners, remain accountable for their responsibilities, commitments, and decisions.
- **Maintain open and continuous communication channels** to sustain relationships and partnerships throughout, and beyond the duration of each given project; and finally,
- **Seek out creative solutions to project challenges**, whether they originate with adjacent business or other properties, intersecting transportation networks or services (including transit service), or project financing.

Background

Rethinking I-94

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) identified opportunities to improve community engagement by recognizing the history of development—and divisions—within the neighborhoods it serves. With a focus on project development, a robust community engagement process was designed to elicit two main purposes; 1) feedback on the current I-94 project, and 2) to build relationships to sustain long-term community engagement. This process emphasized the following five key goals:

- Hear more voices.
- Focus on those impacted.
- Improve diversity and inclusion.
- Engage impacted people earlier.
- Build resilient relationships.

Initial steps included conducting a series of listening sessions to collect information from the community. Through these efforts, MnDOT recognized the importance of providing access to and creating local jobs; of meeting the community at their already-scheduled meetings or community events and in their neighborhoods; of giving ample notice leading up to meetings; and of explaining not only what, but why project constraints exist. Another lesson was that community engagement is not something that one can “dip in to” when needed; rather, it is a sustained and integral part of the effective everyday functioning of a State DOT.



Source: MnDOT

By focusing on community engagement throughout the initial and ongoing development of the I-94 project, MnDOT is learning not only about the community, but also about the agency itself, including better understanding the competencies needed to effectively serve the residents in the area, and the need for more consideration of the communities that transportation projects impact. MnDOT built a foundation for future authentic, ongoing public engagement, and forged relationships with community groups, which can be effective partners in moving transportation projects forward in the Twin Cities.

Peer Exchange Overview

Event Goals and Peer Selections

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Peer Exchange was a two-day event focused on exploring key issues and opportunities that may influence the success of the Rethinking I-94 project. By sharing the experiences of peers in other jurisdictions and discussing their applicability in Minnesota and the Twin Cities, the event provided an opportunity for MnDOT staff to consider their approach to public engagement, stakeholder, and partner coordination. The event was hosted by the MnDOT Metro District Office and sponsored by the FHWA/FTA's TCPB program, which assisted with planning and documentation of the event and funded the participation of the following peer presenters:

Timothy Hill, Administrator of the Ohio Department of Transportation Office of Environmental Services

Mr. Hill has over 25 years of experience in project management and development, environmental document preparation review, and oversight. He has 20 years of experience with the Ohio DOT (ODOT), where he is the Administrator of the Office of Environmental Services (OES). Mr. Hill's office takes an interdisciplinary, scientific approach to providing education, training, technical expertise, and policy development to Federal, State, and local governments in Ohio.

As the Administrator for OES, Mr. Hill seeks to ensure a safe, efficient, and environmentally compliant intermodal transportation system, while encouraging best practices and proactively working toward consensus among transportation and community interests. Mr. Hill is responsible for leading teams to develop policy and direction for integrating environmental decisions into all operations within ODOT.

Mr. Hill was the lead manager of NEPA approval for the I-70/71 Columbus Crossing project. He is also responsible for ODOT's Project Development Process, and can provide detail regarding the processes for management and integration of project design and NEPA review and approvals in Ohio.

Mr. Hill has been an active member of American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and currently serves as the Vice Chair of the Standing Committee on the Environment (SCOE). Mr. Hill has a B.A. in Design Technology with a focus on Architectural and Environmental Design.

Michael Trepanier, Senior Project Manager for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation

Mr. Trepanier has more than a decade of transportation and environmental project planning experience. In his current position with Massachusetts DOT (MassDOT), Mr. Trepanier manages major, complex projects in urban contexts. These projects, including the McGrath Boulevard Project in Somerville, MA and the Route 9 Corridor Improvements project in Hadley, MA, involve extensive public involvement, technical analysis, and wide political interest. In this role, he oversees the management of multidisciplinary teams and leads community involvement activities, including the creation of working groups and the management of their activities, to engage the general public and key stakeholders in project development.

In addition to his work with MassDOT, Mr. Trepanier is actively involved with the American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO), serving on the Standing Committee on the Environment (SCOE) and Environmental Process & Analysis Subcommittee (EP&A). He recently gave a presentation at the Transportation Research Board's 2016 Annual Meeting's Session on Emerging Topics at State DOTs: Public Health and Transportation.

Mr. Trepanier started his career as a natural resources scientist and previously served as a Senior Environmental Planner/Supervisor, conducting environmental planning for MassDOT, and as a Natural Resources Scientist with a private consulting firm. He holds a BS in Earth Science and Hydrogeology from the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Peer Exchange Sessions

The MnDOT Peer Exchange took place over two days, August 15 – 16, 2017 in St. Paul. Both days began with a networking session and breakfast provided by the host agency, MnDOT. On day one, Brian Isaacson of MnDOT; Arlene Kocher, Division Administrator of the FHWA MN Division Office; and, Jim Thorne of the FHWA Resource Center provided opening remarks.

Introductions

Mr. Isaacson provided an overview of the Rethinking I-94 Project, and then led the peers and participants on a bus tour of the project corridor to provide a better understanding of the local context and identify some key locations along the route. Following the tour, Tim Hill and Michael Trepanier presented overviews of their agencies' respective projects: ODOT's I-70/I-71 corridor, and MassDOT's Grounding McGrath Highway project. Finally, Jody McCullough provided a presentation about the FHWA's recent rulemaking regarding Planning & Environmental Linkages, and the underlying legislation, both of which are intended to accelerate project delivery through improved coordination and collaboration.

Topic Sessions

FHWA framed the event around three topic areas. The first topic focused on team structures and the decision-making process. Both Mr. Hill and Mr. Trepanier provided more detailed presentations about their agencies' approach to this topic as it applied to each of their example projects. After the peers' presentations, participants in the exchange were divided into small "break-out" groups and provided with a set of questions to help focus discussion among a subset of participants around a particular issue or strategy presented by the peers. These questions were designed to encourage participants to consider how the strategies and lessons learned described in the peers' presentations could be applied to MnDOT's I-94 project, and other projects statewide. Following the discussion sessions, each table reported back to the assembled group with their conclusions. Finally, Brenda Thomas of MnDOT led the peers and others in reflections on the recommendations from each group, and Jim Thorne recapped the day's discussion and themes.

Day two of the exchange repeated the format of the previous afternoon, covering two additional topic areas: Community Involvement, and Challenges, Risks, and Recommendations. Small group discussion and presentations, as well as reflections on the discussion from MnDOT, were followed by a recap from Jim Thorne. The event concluded with a panel discussion and Q&A facilitated by Mr. Thorne featuring Ms. McCullough, Mr. Hill, Mr. Trepanier and Mr. Isaacson. Commissioner Charles Zelle provided closing remarks.

For additional details of the agenda, see Appendix B; and for additional details about the discussion questions and the report out from each group, see Appendix C.

Peer Project Presentations

The Power of Community Involvement: ODOT's 70/71 Project

The I-70/I-71 Project was designed to address the large-scale safety hazards, access barriers and traffic delays caused by the design of the I-70/I-71 interchange in Columbus Ohio (also known as the Columbus Split). Constructed in the 1960s and designed to carry 125,000 vehicles per day, the corridor now carries almost 200,000 vehicles daily and experiences 3.3 crashes per day in a 1.5 mi segment. Potential solutions to these problems were very complex, and required a large-scale investment and long time frame for implementation, as well as community buy-in.

ODOT conducted public engagement regarding the project and the phased implementation idea, as well as the overall project design. Public comments focused on the preservation of access in the redesign process, which would necessitate a lengthy consideration of designs. ODOT also presented a wide variety of design features for the projects, and asked for input. This exchange led to the selection of widened bridges designed to reconnect communities, which included green spaces, bicycle and pedestrian paths, along with the creation of the Long Street Bridge Cultural Wall with artwork displaying community history.



Source: ODOT

In order to move the project forward, ODOT theorized a schedule of phased construction, stretching over about a dozen years. Each phase would address another aspect of interchange or stretch of highway. ODOT's constant communication with the affected communities helped to explain this long process and secure continued community support. The final project will include significant redesign of the bridges connecting main arterial streets on either side of the sunken highways. The borders of the

highway will also be reimagined to minimize visibility and impacts of the highway, using some environmental mitigation funds for the installation of buffers, noise walls, and trees. Phases are being built as funds become available, with each segment capable of standing alone to minimize risk of funding uncertainty.

Reconnecting Somerville: MassDOT's Grounding McGrath Highway Project



Source: MassDOT / Google Earth

The McGrath Highway (Route 28) runs between Mystic Avenue/I-93 to the north and the Monsignor O'Brien Highway at the Cambridge line to the south. The McCarthy Overpass is the elevated section, or "viaduct" which provides a significant link on the McGrath corridor. The Grounding McGrath Highway project seeks to address the division of city of Somerville by the construction of McGrath Highway in 1959. The highway was built as a conduit from the north into Boston, prior to the construction of I-93. The two highways now run parallel and serve the same basic purpose, opening the possibility for reimagining McGrath Highway.

Somerville is the most densely populated municipality in New England, and residents in the areas impacted by McGrath Highway have long advocated for reconnecting the Eastern and Western portions of the community to increase access to jobs and other amenities. A desire to serve the surrounding community led to consideration of many alternatives for replacement by MassDOT, which conducted a

public engagement process to gather input from local residents. Advocates within the community recommended removal of McGrath Highway and its replacement with a four-lane boulevard and the addition of complete streets including bicycle lanes, improved pedestrian crossings, and more open space. The considered alternatives included 4, 5, and 6 lane options; lowering the highway to at-grade level; and integration of new access roads, a rotary, or enhanced crossings. The largest issue posed by taking the community's recommended action was the potential for increased traffic delays due to reducing the road lanes.

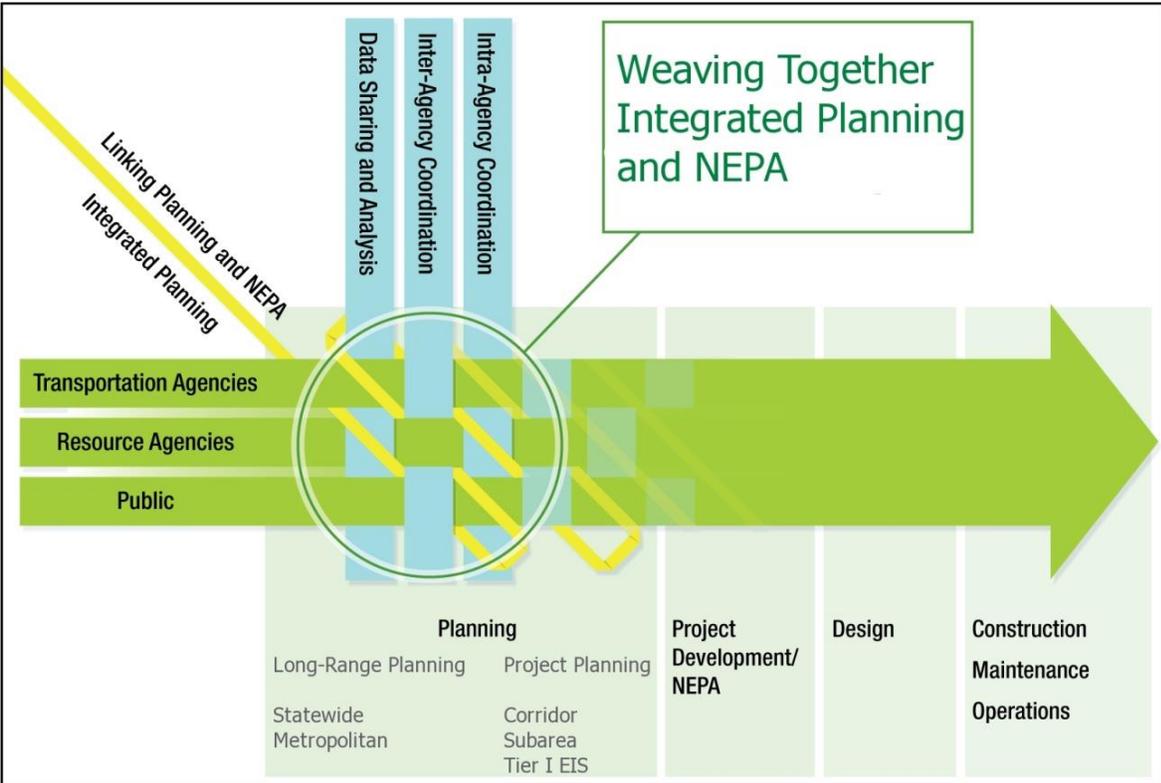
MassDOT completed its study of the proposed alternatives and recommended a 6 lane, at-grade Boulevard. After MassDOT presented this recommendation, the community encouraged the agency to again consider a four-lane alternative, leading MassDOT to study the impacts of the proposed design on the community. Ultimately, the agency returned to a proposed design of 6 lanes separated by a planted median, and incorporating a separated bicycle path along the length of the corridor, as well as two new pedestrian crossings. The LOS for pedestrians is expected to increase from mostly C/D to A/B, and LOS for bicyclists is expected to increase from 4 to 1-2.

Key Themes and Lessons Learned

Applying Planning & Environmental Linkages (PEL) Frameworks

Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) is a broad category of planning activity that encompasses strategies to build relationships between actors in the planning and environmental review processes, improve project permitting and delivery speed, and produce benefits in the design of transportation projects on the ground. As a collaborative approach to decisionmaking, PEL is intended to be very flexible in its execution. The goal is to use the planning process to further consider environmental issues and community engagement, before the NEPA process begins. The process is also designed to integrate traditional planning processes with planning and analysis for NEPA, in an attempt to streamline the project delivery process.

The ultimate goal and benefits of PEL include improved information sharing, elimination of duplicative efforts in planning and NEPA processes, improved communication and stronger relationships, early consultation and collaboration among stakeholders to identify potential impacts, accelerated project delivery, better environmental outcomes, timely permit decisions, and mutually beneficial outcomes. By incorporating environmental considerations and environmental agency staff earlier in the process, PEL aims to reduce the time spent in the NEPA process and to produce projects with better human and natural environmental outcomes.



Graphic depicting the intersection of planning and environmental review (NEPA). Source: FHWA Office of Planning, Realty & Environment

Additionally, PEL activities can be combined with other tools for improved project decision-making, including programmatic mitigation planning. By identifying a list of preliminary alternatives, PEL activities can gather planning data for many (if not all) alternatives subsequently considered under the

NEPA process, and potentially eliminate certain alternatives to narrow the focus of the NEPA review. Investing in the public engagement process during planning can also give project developers more time to respond to input and questions, and allows for a more robust integration of concerns into the project designs developed. Finally, PEL requirements ensure that planning projects (analyses and decisions) are of a high quality and are well-documented so that they can be incorporated by reference or otherwise used to inform the NEPA process, without duplicating those efforts.

PEL addresses requirements codified under federal statutes within 23 U.S.C. Sections 134, 135, 139, 168, 169, 212, and 318; and under federal regulations within 23 CFR Sections 450 and 771, and 40 CFR Sections 1500-1508. These statutes and regulations cover the environmental review process, transportation planning and programming, and integrating environmental concerns into the planning process. Additional information is available in [FHWA's PEL Q&A](#) and on the [FHWA Environmental Toolkit PEL](#) website. FHWA's PEL Program offers technical assistance, including workshops, peer exchanges, webinars, and other training materials, as well as assistance provided through field offices.

Engaging Communities

Partner with strategic neighborhoods

Mr. Hill of ODOT suggested that large-format public meetings have limitations for big projects with many stakeholders. He encouraged framing events in a manner that makes projects as “local” as possible and focused on having more individual community meetings. Broader engagements can uncover the most common problems and simplest solutions, but examining the needs of subsets of a community can dramatically improve the likelihood of achieving targeted solutions. He suggested to have the mass meetings required for NEPA, but structured to produce more specific resolutions, whether by grouping stakeholders with common (or competing) interests or by convening influential stakeholders before major public meetings.

Mr. Hill suggested identifying the most active and connected people in each given community; for each person, make an effort to understand how they are linked to the community, and how you can best leverage their relationships for two-way engagement: both disseminating information and collecting input. If those people leave or disengage with your project, have a plan for continuity with others they know. Study the history—and ask those who know it first-hand—why some communities have more influence and wealth and why others have been marginalized. Knowing these nuances about a community will prepare your project for possible challenges, whether because of political inertia, environmental justice (EJ), accessibility, and other issues. Focus on these communities' needs and how you can help them through your project to transform community members into project advocates.

Discussion: Peer exchange participants suggested partnering with a wide array of local stakeholders, including: The watershed authority (for permitting), the Army Corps of Engineers for consultation regarding the environmental compliance, and the National Park Service for guidance on issues that may occur along or near the Mississippi river; universities and schools and school districts; neighborhood organizations, including those from communities farther afield than I-94; AAA; the MN Trucking Association and Freight Industry; the Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Tourism; the St. Paul and Minneapolis Parks Boards; the Super Bowl Committee (regarding impacts from and on the upcoming Super Bowl and related developments), the Minnesota Department of Health, elected officials, and supporting agencies. Connect to Local/Regional land use plans, transportation plans,

economic development plans, public involvement plans, historic studies, etc. to determine which organizations may already have reason to collaborate.

Partner with key communities (EJ, ADA)

Mr. Trepanier, an environmental planner, recommended having planning and environmental staff work together, even literally venturing together to meet with the community and study neighborhoods. The sooner in the planning process neighborhoods impacted by issues of environmental justice can be identified, the earlier they can be incorporated into conversations about ameliorating the impacts of legacy planning decisions and even making radical improvements.

Mr. Hill described an ODOT effort to redesign an overpass on Long Street between downtown Columbus and the King-Lincoln/Bronzeville Arts & Entertainment District, a historical area. The King-Lincoln/Bronzeville community had been effectively cut off from Columbus proper since the 1960s, and the Long Street Bridge was identified as a candidate for improvement through the I-71 project. Although it had been rehabilitated in the 1980s and was in physically good condition, the road beneath (I-71) needed to be widened, forcing the replacement of the bridge. A public and advisory committee recommended using the bridge to artistically honor and celebrate the history and culture of the Bronzeville community in a visually compelling way that would create a signature feature in the state of Ohio. Achieving an aspirational goal such as this required close and continuous collaboration with the community.

Ultimately, a 240 foot “cultural wall” bridging the two communities on either side of I-71 was devised. Built on the south walk of the bridge, the wall would feature sixty 4 foot by 8 foot panels etched (rather than printed, to ensure longevity) with images from local history, composed into a mural by two artists chosen by the community, Kojo Kamau of Columbus State Community College and Larry Winston Collins of Miami University. The wall celebrates the people and accomplishments of the King-Lincoln and Discovery District neighborhoods, and each image connects to the past or present of the community, and features artists, athletes, teachers, preachers, writers, musicians, churchgoers, and business leaders. The other side of the overpass is covered with new green space, a short walking path, and seating. All of this work, and the expansion of cycling and pedestrian paths besides, was funded in an 80/20 split between ODOT and FHWA. The final budget was \$1.3 billion.



Aerial photograph of Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall installation, over I-70/I-71, showing the expanding bridge width, art installation, and expanded sidewalks and landscaping along both sides of the roadway (left image) and an aerial photograph of the original bridge with a narrower profile and no landscaping and minimal pedestrian space (right image). Source: Mike Cairns, care of ODOT

Discussion: The meeting attendees asked each other which communities may benefit from different approaches to public engagement. Perhaps, some proposed, it would be beneficial to speak to some community members with disabilities—even to tour their neighborhoods with them to experience how they navigate existing infrastructure—to ask how to meet or go above and beyond Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for sidewalks, curb ramps, traffic signals, and other elements that contribute to detract from mobility. Further, it was suggested that MnDOT solicit assistance from the U.S. Access Board, a federal agency that promotes equality for people with disabilities, via reports, advocacy, and workshops.

The Twin Cities is home to many diverse neighborhoods, each with its own political situation. Becoming familiar with the needs of these communities can be difficult, but some reported that the dialogue process could start on the right foot by simply asking when a given community would want to or could conveniently meet with planners. Holidays, the start of school, and other factors will compete for attention, and better scheduling may also improve the quality and quantity of responses. Don't just swoop in, they said, and expect to be given the whole story.

More than meetings

In addition to being required for NEPA, public meetings are essential for building connections between planners and constituents. For example, on a project that is currently underway, MassDOT has already held two public information meetings, eight working group meetings, five targeted stakeholder briefings, and two municipal coordination sessions. In pursuit of the McGrath Boulevard redevelopment project, MassDOT representatives also made appearances in public events: the Somerville ArtBeat Festival, the Bay State Bike Week Kick-Off, and the Union Square Farmers Market. For the I-70/71 Project, ODOT convened or attended more than 500 community meetings and collected thousands of public comments.

Both peers encouraged planners and officials to go to the people, rather than always asking them come to formal meetings or hearings. They also emphasized translating materials to match the audience, whether by producing materials in multiple languages or by augmenting presentations to highlight impacts on the neighborhoods to which they will be shown. If at a street fair, discuss walkability or noise mitigation. If at business event, discuss impacts on access and investment opportunities. Lean on relationships and build new ones. Trust that the community knows where you should be going, who to meet, where to spend energy. By visiting broader community events, planners and officials may be exposed to other topics that offer opportunities for collaboration or synergy.



Photograph of project presentation boards showing maps and cross-sectional renderings of proposed configurations, set up in a public green rather than in a meeting room. Source: MassDOT

Discussion: The attendees focused on how showing up in public can demonstrate a commitment to the community. They reiterated the importance of being invited to and the opportunity to contribute to events. Doing similar community engagement in Minneapolis regarding rehabilitation of bridges overpassing Interstate 35, members of MnDOT set up stations at events such as Twin Cities World Refugee Day Festival (at Loring Park, just blocks from I-35) with chairs, games, multilingual handouts, and MnDOT community liaisons who could speak with attendees in English, Somali, and Spanish. One attendee recommended seeking a spot near the shade to better to attract those looking for rest.

When hosting conventional meetings, providing support for attendees, including childcare and activities for children during meetings is recommended as well as hosting events in areas that are considered safe (such as libraries or churches) during convenient times. Some recommended posting notice of events in highly visible areas such corner stores, groceries and liquor stores, .

Communicating Clearly

Crucial to successfully collaborating with project stakeholders is reaching a point where people of different backgrounds and training can engage with complex subjects on even footing. Communicating

project details clearly, succinctly, and with attention to the audience’s concerns is key, but there are plenty of ways to do so.

Create visuals and plans that speak

Site plans, maps, and other planning documents are generally not optimized for broad understanding. They can obscure the impacts of a project by distracting from the issues community members wish most to discuss and resolve.

Mr. Trepanier urged peers to find different ways to “translate, communicate, show” complex ideas in colorful, straightforward ways without simplifying materials to the point of caricature. He recommended an array of informative products, from visual-forward materials for informal community events (such as staffing informational tables at a street fair) to more detailed documents made available online. MassDOT prepared printed project fact sheets for public appearances and meetings; Trepanier encourages making copies available in multiple languages when interfacing with multilingual community members. Likewise, project websites should prioritize accessibility over visual flash, clearly delineate project goals and proposals, and offer direct means of offering comments and asking questions.

Today, engineers, planners, and officials have a variety of software options and tools for presenting data. Mr. Trepanier suggests that there are appropriate moments and audiences for charts and maps, renderings and design plans, photographs, anything else one can imagine. When presenting complex schematics or plans, he recommends colorizing critical components, drawing focus to them and making connections clearer. Visual aids are most useful when they are legible, understandable, and simplified. The goal of such images, Mr. Trepanier said, should be to show how changes will fit into familiar places, rather than simply showcasing designers’ ideas. Further, distinctions should be made between precise plans and mock-ups, lest limited comment time be spent on questions about the configuration of placeholder details rather than on more tangible factors (e.g. “tree icons are not representative of final landscaping”). In addition to visualizations in plan-view, and 3-D views, maps can be helpful ways to communicate about site conditions, or bigger changes or trends over time.



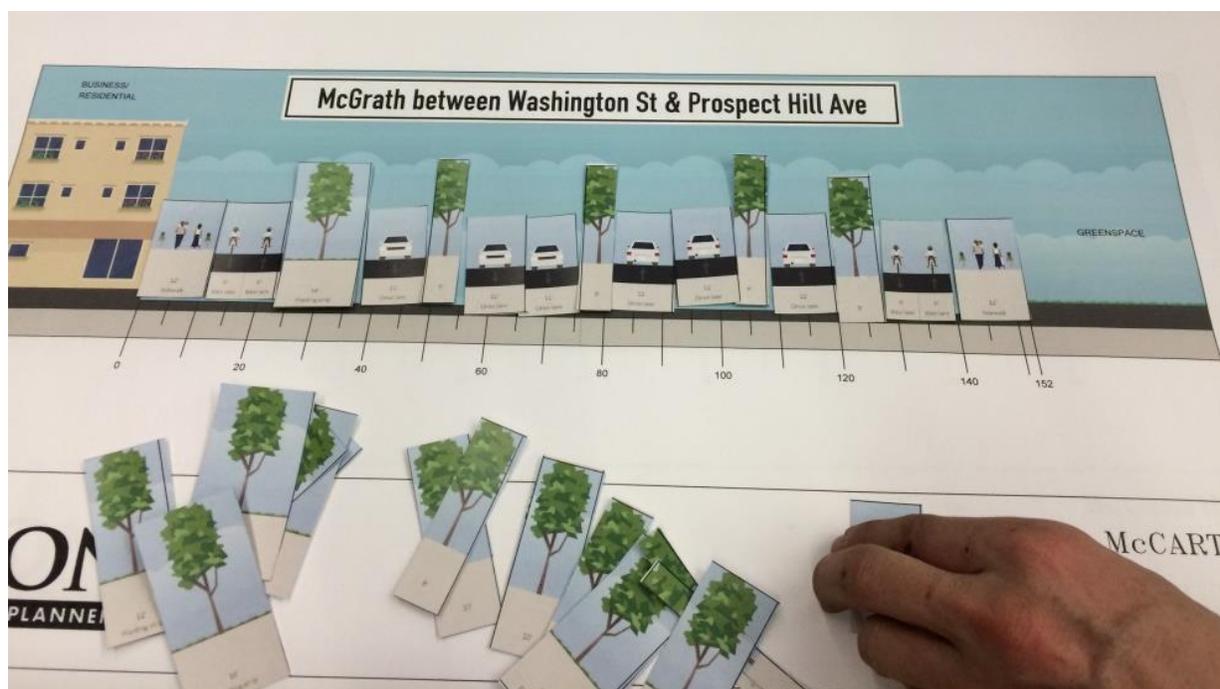
Rendering of a proposed reconfiguration of McGrath Highway, showing a ghosted image of the existing elevated structure in the background, and a multiway boulevard with separated bike lanes, sidewalks, and landscaping in its place. Source: MassDOT

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can play a critical role in consolidation, analysis, and presentation of various data in map format. Data can include area-based information, such as regional demographics and land use; or network-based information, such street network density, traffic volumes, and “travel-shed” data. The latter information communicates about street connectivity and access by showing

distances that can be reached from a central location, based on different street connection options and mode choices.

In presenting information visually, it helps to employ standardized design formats for the sake of continuity and clarity. If attending or organizing frequent public events, a consistent visual scheme may even give a project an identity and help passersby find your team repeatedly. In discussion, attendees noted that MnDOT in fact has templates for precisely this sort of thing, although they may not be used consistently as teams change over time.

It is common enough for large-scale planning project proposals to fail to capture the imagination of those most impacted (both positively and negatively) by their outcomes. It can be difficult to communicate benefits and changes, to make projects “real” and personal. Some small tweaks to common tools can improve those odds. Renderings can be made at human-scale perspectives, include familiar landmarks, and use “cut-out” characters representative of the community.



An image from a MassDOT public workshop showing a roadway design activity. Participants composed their own preferred cross sections for a new McGrath Boulevard using components from “StreetMix” a web-based tool for developing street sections. Source: MassDOT

Relate projects to audience

Mr. Hill discussed the multiple benefits of presenting conversations and messaging in easily-digestible bites. Projects such as Rethinking I-94 take years, but piecemeal efforts may obscure progress to the point of public frustration. He suggests making sure communities know what to expect, how the project will benefit them, when and where they can anticipate disruption, what forms those disruptions will take, what the stakes are of undertaking the project or not, and likely failure modes. By breaking things down to neighborhood-level or issue-specific deliverables is a better approach in communicating with the public.

Articulating Project Boundaries

Cities across America are experiencing shifts in transportation mode share, ridership, and volumes. Because projects such as the Rethinking I-94 have far-reaching impacts on their communities and policymakers, there are limits to what can be planned and accomplished. To engage with the public in good faith, planners must know what is possible for a single project to achieve.

Know the scope of your project

In conversations with stakeholders, new ideas will reveal themselves, low-hanging fruit will come into view, and priorities may even change. This is as it should be, but budgetary and technical limits remain. Working with the community can determine which mitigation measures will have the best impact.

When ODOT told members of the St Paul AME Church in Columbus—adjacent to I-71—that their church would lose some parking spots to an overpass redesign, they also asked what construction and environmental mitigation measures would do the most for the church. Given information about the ODOT timeline and budget for mitigation, the Church requested mitigation funds be used to help them acquire a parking lot next to their church, surprising planners but providing a swift resolution once the mechanism for doing so was worked out. In addition, the church raised money to match ODOT investment in noise mitigation; a new roof, insulation, seal and grout, and upgraded windows obviated the construction of a noise wall in a tight space that would have required a right of way taking.

Discussion: You can't plan for everything... yet

With so many planners in one room, it should be no surprise that discussion groups dedicated much of the urban issues on the far horizon: How will autonomous vehicles change car ownership and ridership? At what rate will the Twin Cities' population grow? Will there be radical changes in zoning or housing policy? How will autonomous vehicles impact parking needs? What are the current limits to the adoption of cycling, transit, and walking as primary modes of transportation? And again, will autonomous vehicles and cycling change how I-94 functions? It's nearly impossible to plan precisely for the major shifts anticipated in ridership, fleet composition, autonomous vehicles, etc. Some of those changes are decades away from constituting a major change to infrastructure needs; some we simply don't have enough information about right now. Although many attendees of the peer exchange are mindful of the future changes concomitant with the advent of autonomous vehicles, they acknowledged that today, with only the merest voluntary guidelines for developing such technologies established, some questions are unanswerable. One recommended keeping abreast of research and reports such as the Transportation Research Board's [Foresight NCHRP Report 750 Series: Informing Transportation's Future](#) (which examines freight movement, climate change, technology, sustainability, energy, and socio-demographics). At best, perhaps it will be possible to plan for flexibility in ways that don't preclude future amendments. This can be difficult to admit, but choosing to return to a question in the future is not the same as ignoring it.

Scenario planning is another strategy for working collaboratively to imagine how various land use and transportation and policy approaches may play out in the future. FHWA TPCB program offers technical assistance and peer exchanges regarding scenario planning: <https://planning.dot.gov/scenario.asp>

Managing Community Expectations

Communicating possibilities accurately and ensuring that community input be reflected in project outcomes were topics that were most stressed during presentations and discussions.

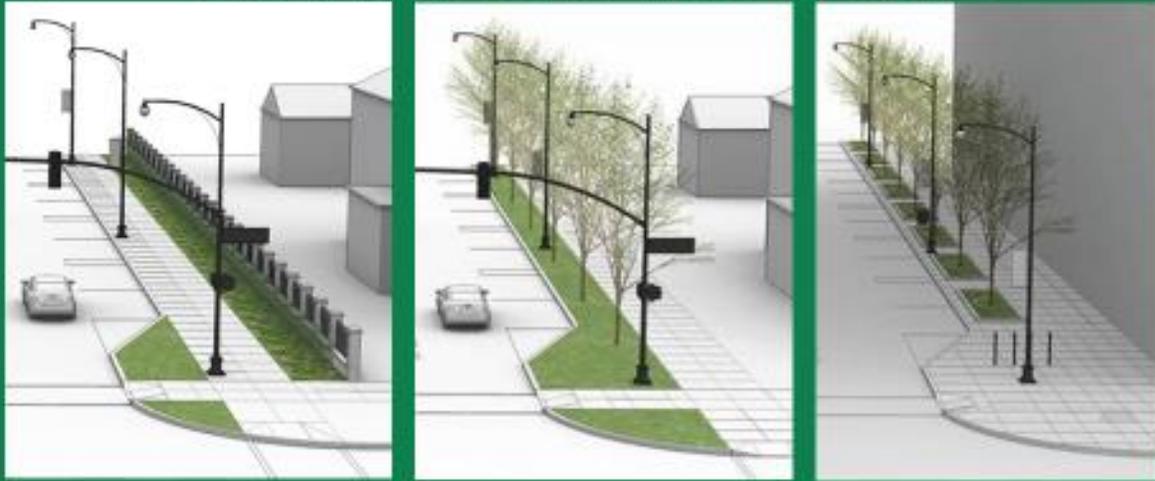
Be transparent about hierarchy

The inherent challenge and value of community engagement is the pairing of expert knowledge of systems design with on-the-ground lived experience and needs. Though so-called “local experts” from the community offer crucial understanding that planners and officials couldn’t practically gain otherwise, it isn’t possible to explain the full ins and outs of, for example, the NEPA process in each interaction. Final decisions are ultimately going to be made by the relevant agencies and departments. It’s critical to make this clear, Mr. Trepanier insists, without coming off as imperial. Clearly delineated responsibilities and expectations can make interactions more approachable and lower stakes for some who may otherwise be intimidated. Most importantly, setting boundaries in effect unleashes creativity where it can do the most.

Make space for creativity

Both of the peers encouraged establishing several forms of structure for meetings with the community such as maintaining conversations on topic. In a conversation about redesigning an overpass, such a “menu” may have included several components: sidewalks (against curb or not), trees and greens (of different sizes and arrangements, with different varieties of tree cover and fill), wall designs and surfacing, lighting, benches, parking, bike lanes, etc. At different phases in the planning and development process, it may be appropriate to present physical samples of public furniture, plants, and so on. Planners should understand that context matters—what may be a welcoming tree cover in one neighborhood may obscure hazards in another. Be sure to ask how and why some options are desirable or not, rather than simply tallying votes. The menu approach, according to Mr. Hill, helped to take the focus off of the interstate and more about sustaining the communities.

Sidewalks and Tree Options



- Sidewalk against curb
- Sidewalk not against curb
- Tree lawn options



11

An image from an ODOT presentation during a public workshop showing a three different options for sidewalk and landscape configuration. Providing a set of pre-determined alternatives keeps community input focused on feasible, fiscally constrained options. Source: ODOT

Ensuring Accountability

Iterative consensus

Consistent, recurring meetings provide more opportunities for community interaction and for ideas to develop. At planning meetings, commit to return and determine details of a project when ready for actual construction. Get a cooperation agreement (like Memoranda of Understanding) with a community where possible. If the community point person disappears, a relationship with the community can continue. Where possible, hire from the community (for liaisons, contracting, etc.).

Partnering for success

Another critical component of a successful consensus-building effort is to involve key partner agencies early in the planning process. This strategy is related to Planning & Environmental Linkages (PEL) approaches to project planning whereby environmental regulatory and permitting agencies like the Fish & Wildlife Service and Army Corps of Engineers are engaged early, while a potential project's scope is still being determined (e.g. during initial project planning, or even long-range planning). By taking a collaborative approach to planning and project development, rather than waiting to seek permits after many project decisions have already been made, project planners can realize greater efficiencies in the environmental review and permitting process—with fewer surprises and subsequent project changes required to secure permits. Additionally, projects that have more stakeholder and partner involvement

earlier in the process can yield more innovative approaches to problem solving, as the skills and approaches of different disciplines are brought together in a more creative and dynamic process. This approach can also transform other agency staff into additional project advocates by securing their buy-in through early engagement and collaboration, and by potentially incorporating “win-win” strategies within a project’s design that meet transportation, as well as community and/or environmental goals. For such collaboration to work, accountability and trust between partners is crucial.

Be in touch

Essential to accountability is maintaining a record of what has been discussed in public. The MassDOT team wrote out stenographer-style records of community meetings, which allowed attendees as well as other stakeholders not in attendance see that their comments and discussions were documented. Even when an opinion or complaint cannot be adequately addressed by a project, documenting that the input was heard and recorded, along with a response about why the feedback could not be fully addressed, is important to be transparent about the public engagement and project development process. This will help to maintain trust between project team members and community members and stakeholders, and the record can be used to verify passed decisions if there are subsequent questions about what led to certain decisions.

At the beginning of the I-70/71 project, ODOT did not have a system to track feedback. Since then, the agency has been developing a public comment system that will direct questions to the appropriate staff person for a response, then to a supervisor for approval, then post the response publicly. The system will cut down on redundant questions and answers, while improving likelihood of stakeholders getting the right information promptly. It is expected to roll out in early 2018. Social media is an essential form of communication via which the community will expect to be able to ask questions, voice questions, and receive project updates. There are new technologies and platforms every year, and what has worked well in the past isn’t guaranteed to function similarly in the future. It is helpful to have a communications team member who is well-versed in the analog and digital communication methods that best reach the community members and stakeholders being engaged. Not everyone is using the latest social media tools, so finding ways to meet the community on their terms—and via the mediums that work best for them—is critical.

Tim Hill of ODOT encouraged project planners to develop press packages before public meetings, and even meeting with the press before a public event, to improve the likelihood and accuracy of media coverage of engagement efforts.

Finding Creative and Flexible Solutions

Impacts from adjacent development vs impacts on adjacent development

Much of I-94 runs parallel to the Metro Transit Green Line, a major investment in infrastructure between the Twin Cities. Between 2007 and 2016, the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative organized a large group of local and national investors to develop the areas adjacent to and beyond the Green Line. Their model, which included funders creating a flexible “Catalyst Fund” that made over 160 grants totaling nearly \$12 million, could serve as a model for both engaging major stakeholders. The Metro Transit representative who attended the peer exchange offered several additional insights into developing flexible solutions to complex problems, based on their work in developing the region’s light rail transit (LRT) lines. Learning from other major capital planning and project development efforts in the

region, including other modes, can be a valuable strategy to develop creative “out of the box” solutions to various project challenges.

Innovative project financing strategies

Depending on market conditions, creative opportunities for raising capital may be available to agencies such as MnDOT. Such considerations may include engaging in public-private partnerships (P3), marketing the air rights above a project, such as a freeway cap or expanded bridge structure, and engaging in other innovative financing strategies such as DBOO (Design/Build/Own/Operate).

Conclusion

The Rethinking I-94: MnDOT Peer Exchange featured two State DOTs with ample experience in the planning, design, and implementation of complex, multimodal highway projects. Communication and engagement were central to the success of these projects. Through this TPCB Peer Exchange, MnDOT learned from Ohio DOT and Massachusetts DOT useful perspectives and strategies to:

- **Engage with communities** by developing long-lasting relationships with neighborhoods and community organizations that operate as a partnership and information exchange.
- **Use visual tools** such as renderings, full color illustrations, and mapping to ensure project details and options are clearly and legibly presented and understood by community members and stakeholders.
- **Determine internally, and then articulate clearly externally, the limitations of a project**—whether in the form of physical parameters, fiscal constraints, or regulatory requirements, to manage community expectations.
- **Allow for creativity and the expression of local stories and culture where possible**, to recognize the historic contributions of community members to the character of their neighborhoods.
- **Ensure that decision-making is transparent** and that project partners—whether public servants or other agency staff and managers, community members, neighborhood and community organizations, and private partners, remain accountable for their responsibilities, commitments, and decisions.
- **Maintain open and continuous communication channels** to sustain relationships and partnerships throughout, and beyond the duration of each given project; and finally,
- **Seek out creative solutions to project challenges**, whether they originate with adjacent business or other properties, intersecting transportation networks or services (including transit service), or project financing.

The MnDOT Peer Exchange resulted in a fruitful dialog and exchange of ideas between the three State DOTs and FHWA. MnDOT recently reported successful use of the information gathered during the event, and expects to continue to leverage the insights and strategies from the exchange in the Rethinking I-94 and other projects.

Appendices

Appendix A: Key Contacts

Timothy M. Hill, Administrator

Office of Environmental Services
Ohio Department of Transportation
614-644-0377

Tim.Hill@dot.ohio.gov

Michael Trepanier, Senior Environmental Planner

Environmental Services
MassDOT Highway Division
857-368-8828

michael.trepanier@state.ma.us

Brian Isaacson, Director of Planning, Program Management and Transit

MnDOT Metro District
651-234-7855

brian.isaacson@state.mn.us

Brenda Thomas, Engagement and Strategy Director

Rethinking I-94 Project – MnDOT Metro District
651-234-7858

Brenda.Thomas@state.mn.us

James Garland, Team Leader

FHWA Office of Planning
Transportation Planning Capacity Building
202-366-6221

James.Garland@dot.gov

Jody McCullough, Community Planner

FHWA Office of Planning
202-366-5001

Jody.Mccullough@dot.gov

Jim Thorne, Transportation Specialist

FHWA Office of Planning
708-574-8137

Jim.Thorne@dot.gov

Ryan Hixon, Area Engineer

FHWA Minnesota Division Office
651-291-6125

Ryan.Hixson@dot.gov

Appendix B: Peer Exchange Agenda

DAY 1 – Tuesday, August 15, 2017	
TIME	SESSION
8:00 – 8:30 am	Networking
8:30 – 8:45 am	Opening Remarks and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Brian Isaacson, MnDOT – Arlene Kocher, FHWA MN Division Administrator – Jim Thorne, FHWA Resource Center
8:45 – 9:15 am	Rethinking I-94 Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Brian Isaacson (MnDOT)
9:15 – 9:30 am	Break / Load Bus for Tour
9:30 – 11:30 am	Tour of Project Corridor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stop at 2-3 locations
11:30 am – 12:30 pm	Lunch on own <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Downtown St. Paul
12:30 – 1:00 pm	ODOT: Project Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tim Hill
1:00 – 1:30 pm	MassDOT: Project Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Michael Trepanier
1:30 – 2:00 pm	FHWA: PEL Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Jody McCullough
2:00 – 2:15 pm	Break
Topic 1	
2:15 – 2:45 pm	ODOT: Team Structure / Decisionmaking Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tim Hill
2:45 – 3:15 pm	MassDOT: Team Structure / Decisionmaking Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Michael Trepanier
3:15 – 4:00 pm	Breakout Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – See Discussion Questions document for details – Refer to I-94 project
4:00 – 4:20 pm	Report Out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 5 minute summary reports from each breakout group
4:20 – 4:45 pm	MnDOT: Reflections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Brenda Thomas – Feedback and reflections on breakout reports/ideas/proposals
4:45 – 5:00 pm	Recap and Day 2 Preview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Jim Thorne

DAY 2 – Wednesday, August 16, 2017	
TIME	SESSION
8:00 – 8:30 am	Networking
8:30 – 8:45 am	Recap from Day 1 and Purpose of Day 2 — Jim Thorne
Topic 2	
8:45 – 9:15 am	ODOT: Community Involvement — Tim Hill
9:15 – 9:45 am	MassDOT: Community Involvement — Michael Trepanier
9:45 – 10:30 am	Breakouts — See Discussion Questions document for details — Refer to I-94 project
10:30 – 10:50 am	Report out — 5 minute summary reports from each breakout group
10:50 – 11:15	MnDOT: Reflections — Brenda Thomas — Feedback and reflections on breakout reports/ideas/proposals
11:15 am – 12:15 pm	Lunch on own — Downtown St. Paul
12:15 – 12:30 pm	Recap from Topic 2 — Jim Thorne
Topic 3	
12:30 – 1:15 pm	ODOT: Challenges, Risks, and Recommendations — Tim Hill
1:15 – 1:45 pm	MassDOT: Challenges, Risks, and Recommendations — Michael Trepanier
1:45 – 2:30 pm	Breakouts — See Discussion Questions document for details — Refer to I-94 project
2:30 – 2:50 pm	Report out — 5 minute summary reports from each breakout group
2:50 – 3:15 pm	MnDOT: Reflections — Brenda Thomas — Feedback and reflections on breakout reports/ideas/proposals
3:15 – 3:30 pm	Break
Conclusion	
3:30 – 4:15 pm	Panel Discussion / Q&A — Jim Thorne, Facilitator — Jody McCullough — Michael Trepanier — Tim Hill — Brian Isaacson
4:15 – 4:30 pm	Closing Remarks — Jim Thorne, FHWA Resource Center — Commissioner Charles A. Zelle — Brian Isaacson, MnDOT

Appendix C: Discussion Questions and Report Outs

The following materials include the discussion questions that were presented to small “break-out” groups at three separate intervals throughout the peer exchange. These questions focused discussion among a subset of participants around a particular issue or strategy presented by the peers, and encouraged them to consider how the lessons learned from the peers could be applied to MnDOT’s I-94 project, and other projects statewide.

Topic I

Stakeholder/PEL Framework

1. *What are some key planning products (analyses or decisions) for MnDOT to focus on developing in accordance with PEL regulations to allow the agency to accelerate delivery of I-94? (e.g. land use and employment analysis, preliminary screening and elimination of alternatives).*
 - Local/Regional land use plans, neighborhood and community plans.
 - Demographic info: EJ, race, demo, neighborhood composition.
 - Economic Development plans: jobs, “corridor connectivity” to job centers, (re)development initiatives.
 - Transportation Plan Component: Transit, multi modal, freight, asset/performance management, when are connections most valuable.
 - Public Involvement Plan Development: web-based information, online portals for info distribution and input solicitation, surveys (online & phone).
 - Observers: Historic studies, purpose & need, species.
2. *Brainstorm a list of specific project partners (resource agencies, local municipalities, transit agencies, Metro Council, etc.) that should be involved in the planning stage of the I-94 project; describe the benefits of involving them early in the process.*
 - Watershed (permits).
 - National Park Service.
 - Universities and schools, school districts.
 - Neighborhood communities.
 - AAA.
 - Neighborhoods beyond those along I-94.
 - MN Trucking Association and Freight Industry.
 - Chamber of Commerce (Can they help fund work if involved early on?).
 - Department of Tourism (Have helped design/evaluate big projects; wayfinding).
 - St. Paul Parks, MPLS Park Board.
 - Super Bowl Committee members.

- Represents larger regional perspective, long term vision for future development.
 - Rail.
 - Army Corps of Engineers, groups that need to sign off on the environmental process should be approached early.
 - Coast guard.
 - Pollution control.
 - Minnesota Department of Health.
 - Supporting Agencies.
 - Elected Officials.
3. *What other stakeholders and studies can be incorporated into the development of project scope and alternatives, such as Health Impacts Analyses, local neighborhood transportation plans or goals, and other studies?*
- Consideration of Health (Not necessarily HIA).
 - Small Area Plans.
 - Regional/City/County Bike/Ped Plans.
 - Capturing studies/plans for adjacent areas.
 - Innovative engagement strategies for less represented groups.
 - Economic Development – greater MSP, neighborhood business association, Port authority.

Decisionmaking Process

1. *What are some best practices for data sharing and performing technical analyses that MnDOT can apply to I-94 and other projects? (E.g. using GIS-based environmental or cultural resource data to identify potential impacts early in the planning process).*
- Having Planning and Environmental Staff working together, literally. They should be an interdisciplinary team.
 - GIS is a powerful tool. Visualization is key!
 - Having stakeholder committees that represent the broad cross-section of the corridor interests.
 - Information we gather and develop should be clear and understandable.
 - Early identification of EJ Populations and Title 6 considerations.
2. *What are some innovative strategies to fund I-94 and related project construction and maintenance (e.g. local transportation improvements, transit projects, mitigation projects, etc.); Are there opportunities for cost-sharing for projects that serve multiple functions (e.g. overpass reconstruction that better connects two neighborhoods with a multimodal roadway design)?*
- Central Corridor Funders Collaborative.
 - Major stakeholders (community, business, and nonprofit interests).

- Long-term investments, examining short-term and long-term impacts.
 - Created space for the conversation, expanding to housing, etc.
 - Segment the project: zones & sub-zones.
 - Attract local funders by area.
 - Itemized options (a “menu”).
 - Base concepts and limits – MnDOT.
 - Details – Local.
 - *How does equity factor in?*
 - Small funders w/ small pots of money.
 - How to prioritize based on time/energy.
 - Ownership can help drive decisions.
 - Turn to a partnership and help MnDOT, rather than owning everything.
 - Maintenance of Roadside infrastructure.
 - Dedicated funds.
 - Outsource: local business, companies (use “tracta/mowers” to mow).
 - Youth organizations.
 - University/colleges with their own maintenance crews.
 - Tolls.
 - Value capture: notable improvements, encouraging development.
 - Air rights, Design/Build, Design/Build/Own/Operate.
3. How can MnDOT benefit from integrating systems-level (e.g. MnPASS) and regional planning with project-specific decisionmaking (e.g. corridor planning)?
- Clarity.
 - System level planning (asset, safety, MnPASS) feed into I-94 work.
 - System level data have been used in travel pattern analysis.
 - Integrate freight plan and other complete plans.

Topic 2

Community Involvement

1. *What are some new or innovative public involvement techniques from ODOT and MassDOT examples that MnDOT can use for I-94? What are some lessons learned about pitfalls to avoid?*
 - Targeting Strategic Neighborhoods.
 - Isolates ‘hot spots’.

- Focuses on drawing out ‘key’ leaders and stakeholders.
 - Makes it a community decision.
 - Have mitigation choices or “menus”.
 - One-on-one interaction and engagement is critical.
 - Builds relationships and trust.
 - Being selective and doing mitigation efforts is critical.
 - Let neighborhoods guide this.
 - Invest capital budgets in reallocated areas. i.e. Instead of a noise wall, spend some amount in other mitigation measures.
 - Be creative and sensitive to existing conditions (historic preservation, beautification, etc.).
 - Always be aware of multi-modal interests.
2. *What are examples of populations, including Environmental Justice communities, which may benefit from different approaches to public involvement? What kind of strategies should MnDOT employ to reach these populations to ensure they are part of the planning process?*
- ADA.
 - Actually experience the world they navigate (e.g. vision impaired, wheelchair accessible) to gain credibility with the community.
 - Ask and engage the community what is “above and beyond” to them and/or according to the ADA manual.
 - Set up demos.
 - U.S. Access Board (a federal agency that promotes equality for people with disabilities, does workshops).
 - Ethnic/Culturally Diverse Community.
 - Finding who they are.
 - Green line created a lot of this during their work.
 - Challenges: Difference among & within groups.
 - Ask when they want to hear from us so they have opportunity to provide input or react.
3. *How can local partners (e.g. neighborhood organizations, local transportation advocacy groups, etc.) contribute to a broader understanding of community perspectives and needs? How can existing neighborhood, community, transportation and other plans and their goals be incorporated into the I-94 planning process?*
- Local insight.
 - What do they want?

- Gain community support.
 - What can we reasonably do to address what they want?
- Let MnDOT know where people are and go to them.
- Help manage expectations.

Managing Community Expectations

1. How did ODOT or MassDOT manage unexpected issues (in project scoping, community relations, etc.) in the planning process? What strategies should MnDOT consider applying, and what should MnDOT plan to omit or avoid?

- Be flexible and creative.
 - Be prepared to step outside norms or policies to find solutions.
- Manage expectations.
 - Give community a menu of options.
 - Work with community to prepare and develop options.
- Don't dismiss ideas outright as unworkable. Analyze and explain why something is not feasible. This helps establish trust and sets the tone of moving forward.
- Work one on one with communities and make connection in intimate settings.
- If something changes, circle back and re-engage.

2. What key principals and actions can MnDOT take to achieve community buy-in for final project decisions (even if some are controversial or do not satisfy all community desires)? What are some best practices for incorporating community desires into projects, or working with community desires that exceeded project scope/capacity?

- Transparency & Follow Through.
 - "How" to communicate back to the community.
- Mitigation Choices / Menu can come into play.
- Turn to be the connector/facilitator, turn to not leave them hanging.
- Communicating constraints & expectations.
- Ensure agencies are also at the table so the agency is in agreement over commitment. Avoid later hearing "not in my scope".
- Take pulse of own agency.
 - How important is the project to the community?
 - Can time/attention/investment of staff be divided?
- Manage expectations.
 - In responding to an email w/ complaint/concern, prioritize factual responses over rapid responses. That said, acknowledge.

- Acknowledge fear and suspicion. Listen.
- 3. *How can project partners and stakeholders facilitate community relations during both planning and implementation phases of the project?*
 - Host facilities/contact lists.
 - For meetings.
 - Know potential opponents.
 - Build credibility (hire locals).
 - Sponsorship and branding?
 - Heads up on sensitive subjects.
 - What events to attend (when and where).
 - Manage expectations.
 - Communicate budgets and options.
 - How is MnDOT going “above and beyond”?
 - Empower locals with choices.
 - Avoid internal/local politics.

Topic 3

Challenges/Risks/Issues

1. *What do you anticipate as critical funding and implementation challenges for I-94 (e.g. project phasing, advance mitigations, funding reallocation, etc.), and what strategies can MnDOT apply from the peer examples to reduce risks?*
 - Challenges/Risks/Issues.
 - Massive expense and sticker shock.
 - Political blowback.
 - Raised expectations (raised support).
 - Performance measures.
 - System-wide vs local impact.
 - Strategies:
 - Menu approach.
 - Choice, compromise.
 - Repeated reminders about who has to make final decisions.
 - Advocacy.
 - Staging.

- Local contribution, lay the groundwork.
 - Public matters, private matters.
 - Big Picture.
2. *What technical challenges with data, modeling, and anticipating future conditions did the peer experience? How can MnDOT anticipate those issues and mitigate negative outcomes for the I-94 project?*
- Autonomous Vehicles.
 - What are the limits of preparation? How to do more than react?
 - Travel Demand Model.
 - Reliability.
 - Assumptions.
 - Not a one-tool resolution.
 - Possible Goal: to help manage demand, make suggestions on alternative routes or modes.
 - Don't lose sight of immediate issues.
 - Construction & cumulative impacts of a long construction period.
 - Development of transit lines/multimodal system.
 - Impacts (capacity issues).
 - Mode shift.
 - Experience from other projects.
 - Development of the soccer stadium adjacent to I-94.
3. *What challenges did the peers have in communicating about unknowns, and about transformative elements in their projects? How can MnDOT apply lessons learned to engagement and communication with community, stakeholders, and project partners?*
- New/Future technologies.
 - Autonomous and connected vehicles.
 - Uncertainty in general.
 - Plan for flexibility without precluding future amendments.
 - Consider the needs of current operations and added capacity later.
 - NCHRP 750.
 - Moving Populations/Development/Changing Trends.
 - Pay attention to criteria and details. What makes sense?
 - Multimodal access & connections: Support bike/ped/transit. Consider personal security.

- Commitments & Community Trust.
 - Project segmentation.
 - Schedule Delays.
 - “What about us?”
 - Different Efforts for Different Groups: Advisory groups, one-on-one meetings, surveys.
- Ineffectiveness of Public Meetings & Distrust of Government.
 - Get invited in.
 - Host interactions in safe places (libraries, churches), at convenient times.
 - Go to your audience (convenience stores, liquor stores, groceries).
 - Provide support (babysitting, activities for kids during events).

U.S. Department of Transportation
John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
55 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02142-1093
617-494-2000
www.volpe.dot.gov

DOT-VNTSC-FHWA-18-03
FHWA-HEP-18-028